

IN THE CLAIMS:

A clean version of the entire set of pending claims is set forth below, for clarity. A version of claim 14, amended herein, with markings to show changes made relative to the previous version of claim 14, is enclosed herewith.

1. (Previously Amended) A method for reducing the risk of scoring a false-positive test result in testing at least one sample derived from a mammal for the presence or absence of an aberrant prion protein, comprising treating said at least one sample with guanidine thiocyanate or a functional equivalent thereof.
2. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said method further is for reducing the risk of scoring a false-negative test result.
3. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said at least one sample is tested in an immunoassay.
4. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 3, wherein said immunoassay is designed for mass-screening purposes.
5. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising treating said at least one sample with a protease to reduce the presence of normal prion protein.
6. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said mammal is a ruminant.
7. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 6, wherein said ruminant is ovine or bovine.

10. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:
treating at least one first sample derived from said mammal with guanidine thiocyanate or a functional equivalent thereof;
leaving at least one second sample derived from said mammal untreated with guanidine thiocyanate or a functional equivalent thereof; and
comparing the test result of said at least one first sample with said at least one second sample.

11. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 1, further comprising immunologically detecting said aberrant prion protein with at least one antibody directed against a proteinase K resistant part of the aberrant prion protein.

12. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 11, wherein said at least one antibody is directed against a proteinase K resistant N-terminal part of the aberrant prion protein.

13. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 11, wherein said at least one antibody is raised against a peptide derived from the aberrant prion protein.

14. (Twice Amended) The method according to claim 13, wherein said peptide is selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOS:7-30 or functional equivalents thereof.

15. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 11, wherein said aberrant prion protein is immunologically detected in an enzyme-linked immunoassay.

16. (Previously Amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein said enzyme-linked immunoassay comprises a dot-blot assay.